

I'll keep you safe by orphan_account

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Summary:

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I'll keep you safe

Winter of 1987. The Wheelers had gone on a trip to visit Karen's sister, Maggie, in Maine. Nancy Wheeler had left for New York years ago, and Mike Wheeler would rather die than spend an entire week with his stupid cousin. That was the reason he had given for the last two years, at least, when his parents insisted he had to get out of Hawkins for once. But they knew Richie, and they didn't blame Mike for not wanting to spend so much time with him, so they never bothered to argue with him. Yes, Mom, I won't bother Mrs. Byers. I won't leave at night. Yes, I'll be good. Don't worry. No, Mom, I won't go to any party while you're away. You know I hate parties. Yes, Dad, I know how to cook. I can take care of myself. Yes, Mom, I'll do whatever Mrs. Byers says. No, Dad, Will is not gay. He's not my boyfriend. You don't have to worry.

Sometimes, he had to lie. There was no other choice.

But this was the first time he had told such a big lie. Of course, his parents didn't have any way to tell. No, Mom, I can't stand Richie. Yes, I have tried. I want to stay here this winter. It was the same excuse as always and they had no reason not to trust his words.

And yes, he did want to stay there that winter. But maybe if Karen Wheeler could put the white wine cup down for a second, or if Ted Wheeler lifted his eyes from the sports section of the newspaper, they would have noticed the subtle differences, like the way Mike fidgeted with his sleeves, something he did when he was nervous. Or the bruise on his bottom lip that he left from biting it too much, or how impatiently he had insisted that this year he really needed to stay in Hawkins, at the Byers house, just like every other year. Just like every other winter.

To be fair, Mike was an actor. He had been at the drama club of his school for three years. It was something Ted liked to give him shit about, because artists, and specially actors, were a funny thing to him, apparently. I don't want to see you dancing ballet or something, son. You better not follow that fag friend of yours. What was his name...?

And Mike had also learned to stay silent. He never talked with his parents. Yes, he spoke to them. Good morning, Mom. How was your day? No, I didn't start the fight. I got an A in math, Dad. How was Holly? You know, there is a play next we- Do you have any news

from Nancy? I was thinking on becoming a monster hunter, Dad. What do you think? Goodnight, Mom. I didn't want your lov- Goodnight, Dad. I'm so- I want to di- Just leav- Goodnight, Holly. But he never quite said anything to them. He never said things like "I'm in love with my best friend" or "Sometimes I wish I wasn't alive" or "I know you don't really love me, you can stop faking" or "Fuck you, fuck you all. You can say whatever you want about me, but don't call him that"

Mike knew very well how to keep secrets. So it wasn't a problem to pretend he just didn't want to see his annoying cousin to convince his parents to let him stay in Hawkings one more winter.

So he returned to the house that felt more like home than the one where he had been born in. The food may not be that good and the space may be less, but he never looked at the knives for way too long when he was there. He never had to bit his lip whenever he knew he was about to say something and he never felt cold or alone, especially at night. While at his house, he had problems sleeping because he was too angry to either his parents or himself to close his eyes, to think he deserved to sleep, at the Byers house he could drift easily, with Will's arms wrapped around his waist and his chest pressed against his back.

And the Wheeler House was left cold, dark and empty for a few days until lightning and a scream broke the sky, and two seventeen years old boys rushed under the snow with shaky hands and a track of blood left behind them. Mike held the key with numb fingers and struggled to put it in the keyhole, but his clumsy and frantic movements only made him more desperate when he failed. His heart was blind and hysterical, violently jumping inside his ribs until he felt it would break them at any moment. He glanced back at Will, and his breath hitched when he saw the dark liquid running down his face. Will was swinging slightly from side to side, his eyes unfocused, bound to the ground. He was frozen, seemingly unaware of all the shouting coming after them.

"I saw them!" someone yelled.

Mike's heart stopped and he went back to the door. He couldn't feel his hands or find the right key. He cursed under his breath as tears started to form in his eyes, out of panic and frustration.

Will didn't move. He wasn't even breathing. Maybe he wasn't there at all.

"Will..."

“This way! They’re here!”

A blinding light hit Mike’s eyes, like a train in the night, and he was sure he would die out of sheer terror in the place.

Will looked like a statue, maybe the figure of an angel, with a halo of light around him. He didn’t turn around. He didn’t make a sound.

There was no yelling, no words. The cop pointed at them with his flashlight, but didn’t say a word. Mike didn’t see him, but in the way the light vacillated over them, he would have thought the cop was hesitant. Confused, even, on why he would think there was anything there at all.

Then, the mysterious cop snapped his head around, towards and invisible sound at the end of the street, and yelled something at his partners. He took out his gun and pointed his flashlight at the nothing.

Yelling. Put your hands up! Screaming. And then, the gunshots.

Mike had heard gunshots before. When his sister and him were too fed up with their parents’ bullshit, and decided to take their anger on some cans in the junkyard, or a long time before, when the soldiers and the hellhounds have waged war in a government facility because of something that spoke through the innocent boy standing next to him.

Will still hadn’t forgiven himself for that, even if he hadn’t done anything at all.

Mike had heard gunshots before, but they never stopped sending goosebumps all over his skin and driving his heart and lungs to the edge of insanity. His panic-stricken hands, numb from the cold, barely managed to fit the right key and open the door in one clumsy movement, dragging Will inside with him.

He shut the door closed and, finally, let his lungs breathe.

His chest hurt, and the gunshots outside were still going. There were drops of blood in the ground, leaving a track from the door to the spot where Will was standing.

Will looked even worse than how Mike was feeling. There was a dark and gross string of blood coming from his nose, and even more form his ears. Even in the almost absolute darkness, Mike could see he was pale, and shaking uncontrollably. He wondered for a second if he was going to have a seizure.

“Will...?” he asked tentatively, reaching his hand out to touch his shoulder.

Will collapsed into Mike, too weak to hold himself. Mike wrapped his

arms tightly around him, struggling to keep him up. He wasn't the strongest one out there (you can't throw a punch you can't run you're a disaster of a man I wish you weren't my son) but Will needed him. He put one of his arms around his neck and walked him down the basement. He assumed it would be safer there, were there were no widows and they could control the only entrance.

He sat him in the old couch and wrapped an old blanket around him. It kept falling down, so Mike had to take Will's hand and make him hold it. His grip was weak and Mike was scared he may pass out. He didn't want to turn on the lights, so he searched in the dark until he found an old kerosene lamp that hadn't been used since his mother was his age, we guessed. After a couple attempts, he managed to turn it on and put it on the table, in front of Will.

His clothes were stained in blood (not just his own blood, Mike remembered), and his face looked like a ghost's, pale and wide eyed, with rivers of dark, warm liquid in his hair and skin. He wondered if he had blinked at all during the last hour.

"Will, can you hear me?" Mike whispered. He took Will's hands with his own, but nothing stopped the shaking. Will didn't move, didn't return the gesture. "I'm- I'm going to get something to clean you, okay? I'm not going to leave. J-Just stay here"

Mike got up and took a step back, but suddenly, Will gripped at his left hand, tight. Mike turned around to find Will staring at him, his eyes filled with tears.

"I'm sorry, Mike" he whispered. His voice was hoarse and broken. "I'm so sorry"

Mike crouched in front of him and hugged him to his chest. Will let out a sob and grabbed Mike's jacket with weak grip. Mike rubbed circles in his back and kissed his head. The metallic taste of Will's blood (and someone else's blood) made him nauseous, but he didn't let him go.

"It wasn't your fault, Will" he said in his ear. "It was self defense"

Will shook his head and looked at Mike.

"I-I-I h-heard what they said, Mike" he said. He stared into Mike's eyes, waiting for a response Mike didn't know how to give. "I heard what they said"

Mike rubbed the back of his hand with his thumb, trying to soothe him.

"What did they say?"

Will bit his lip and looked down.

"They were talking on t-the radio. They... They said they couldn't find anything..." He sobbed again, but Mike stayed at a prudential distance of one foot, letting him talk. "I... I think I killed them"

He broke into sobs, and Mike wrapped his arms around him, trying to hold the shaking boy, keep him from breaking entirely.

"No, Will" he whined, trying not to (you can't cry you have to be a man men don't cry man up and stop crying stop crying no one will ever love you if you) cry. He needed to be there for Will. He needed to be strong for him. His best friend (his boyfriend) was breaking and falling apart and it was killing him to see him this way, but Will needed him to be strong. "Will, you didn't kill anyone. It was self defense"

"Because I angered them!" he whimpered. "I sh- I should have just ignored them and nothing of this would have happened..."

Mike couldn't help but feel a pang of guilt, remembering the real reason everything turned out so bad. Maybe if he had tried to defend Will in a way that didn't include a fist fight, he wouldn't have to appeal to more drastic measures.

"It was their fault"

"But they didn't deserve to die..."

"They didn't die. There were no bodies, right? They cold just have woken up and walked away..."

"There was so much blood, Mike... P-p-people are dead!"

"No they're not! You didn't kill anyone, Will"

He held Will's face with both of his hands. With all the blood covering him, he looked like someone else. Something else. Some kind of murderous monster with cracks in his brain so deep that it was barely human, now.

But he wasn't a monster. He was just Will. His best friend for more than a decade, the sweet boy that would fight a dragon (or a demon) if he had to. The boy that kissed his tears away when his parents' words became too much and made him feel like he was a person. Like he was actually worthy being loved.

Mike cleared his throat and brushed his thumb across Will's cheek in a soothing motion.

"You didn't kill anyone" he repeated. "You said it yourself: they didn't find anything"

"What if-"

"If they were in the Upside Down or something, El would know, okay?"

Will stared at him for a second, trying to process his words, and softly nodded his head.

Mike smiled and kissed his forehead. The taste of blood hit him again, but he ignored it.

“I’m gonna get something to clean you up, okay?”

Will nodded again, and Mike walked away. He tried to keep Will on sight until he walked out the door and closed it behind him.

He raced to the window and moved the curtains slightly to check for any possible observer. He found none.

He picked some food from the fridge, although there wasn’t much left, and some disinfectant, a clean cloth, bandages, and a bottle of water. He saw in the mirror a dark stain of blood in his jacket, where Will had rested his head. He carelessly threw it in the floor and ran upstairs to pick clean clothes and more blankets. He was barely able to carry them all down the basement. When Will saw him, he tried to help him, but Mike said:

“Don’t. You’re covered in blood”

He didn’t want to sound rude, and he hoped Will hadn’t seen it that way. Mike left everything in the table and moved the kerosene lamp just a little bit closer to the edge, so it wasn’t touching anything. He kept the disinfectant as far as he could from the flame. He didn’t know if heat did anything to it, but it was better not to take any risks. (Ha, says the boy who can barely run and tried to fight a football player for calling his boyfriend a faggot)

He poured some water in a cloth and held Will’s head high with a hooked finger in his chin. Will closed his eyes as Mike cleaned the blood and he started to look more like him, more like Will.

He mentally kicked himself. This had always been Will. Will had always been there, under the blood and the dirt and the fear and the anger. Always. Sweet, beautiful Will, who liked to draw and listen to music and had been the happiest person on Earth when Mike gave him a guitar for his sixteenth birthday. Will, who had been broken over and over again and had to pick up the pieces of his own self until he could smile again. Will, who had scars as deep as the ocean carved into his skin and his mind, that had turned him into something he feared seeing into the mirror, when a drop of blood came from his nose or he could hear all the hate everyone felt towards him, behind the teacher’s plastic smile who secretly thought he should be kicked out of school before he infected someone else with a disease he didn’t have, or the bullies who saw him as less than

human, but were too scared of his sister to open their mouths.

But Mike only saw Will. A beautiful boy that had changed over the years, but never ceased to be him. He was just as human as anyone else. In any case, he was more human than the rest. Even if he felt like a demon at times, he never stopped looking like an angel to Mike.

A guardian angel, maybe. Mike laughed to himself. It would make sense, he thought.

When he finished cleaning all the blood, Mike felt a wave of love for Will overcome him. He wanted to kiss him until he believed him when he said he was beautiful, but Will didn't look in conditions of being kissed at the moment, so Mike limited himself to gently touch his cheek before letting his hands fall to his sides.

"There" he muttered under his breath.

Will opened his eyes again.

"Thanks" he breathed.

"No problem" Mike replied, smiling.

Will glanced at the basement door, and even if Mike couldn't read minds like Will did, he could easily know what he was thinking about. He took his hand and squeezed.

"They won't find us, Will" he said.

Will nodded absently, but didn't look away from the door for a few more seconds, and Mike could feel he was still worried.

They changed into cleaner clothes and laid some blankets in the couch. Mike was starting to get tired, but he wanted to be able to look out for Will.

"Aren't you tired?" Will asked, as he wrapped a blanket around his shoulders.

Mike shook his head and replied:

"I woke up at like, three of the afternoon today. I can stay awake a little longer"

He didn't want to let Will know he was worried, and while Will could easily check if he was lying or not, he had sworn a million he would never do it. And Mike believed him, of course.

Will looked at him and opened his mouth to say something. But instead, he lunged forward and crashed his lips with Mike's.

Will's lips here soft and cold, and shaking slightly, but the kiss wasn't a scared, desperate one. It wasn't one that was looking for a little bit of comfort in the darkest nights. It was sweet and slow. Will's hands were holding Mike's face, and Mike softly caressed his cheek,

brushing his thumb over his cheekbone. It was a kiss that said “I love you” and “I’ll always protect you” and the thought of it made Mike’s heart flutter with warmth. He smiled against Will’s lips and moved a hand to the back of his neck, not holding him as much as he was trying to touch him, to be with him, to show him he loved him.

Will pulled away and rested his head in Mike’s lap.

“You didn’t bring any pillows” he jokingly complained.

“I can get one if you want”

“No. It’s too late”

Mike chuckled and let Will drift into sleep. He looked so peaceful when he slept. Like the last five years hadn’t changed him a bit. Staying at Hawkings just to be with him was totally worth it.

He glanced at the basement door, worrying in any moment, the cops or the assholes who tried to hurt Will would break in and shoot them dead. He may have managed to convince Will, but he couldn’t convince himself so easily.

“I promise, Will” he whispered. “I promise I’ll keep you safe”